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CONSUMPTION, DESIRE AND SURVEILLANCE IN SOCIALISM

FRONTIERS OF SOCIOLOGY

Panel on Consumer Behavior in the Contemporary World Order

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Among the strongest individual memories of life in state-socialism was the lack of desired goods, the "culture" of shortages, and the "dictatorship" over the needs. The consumption of goods that could serve as resources in the construction of individual and social identities was often experienced as personal freedom. This paper analyzes the social experience of a culture of shortages, feelings of inadequacy toward the West, the symbolic value and public meaning of goods, and different practices of the acquisition of material artefacts.

At the backdrop of general discussion of consumption, material culture and desire in socialism we plan to focus on shopping trips to Italy. With the gradual opening of the border between Italy and socialist Yugoslavia after 1955, shopping trips to Italy for acquiring desired goods became regular social events and cultural phenomena. They were not only taken for granted, but became an institutionalized setting of the social and cultural life of the socialist middle class and emerge as a form of articulating the "bottom-up" operation of power and the challenges of domination and control. It explores the system of interaction between border officials and shoppers/smugglers, the traumatic border-crossing experiences of facing customs officers as personalized power, gender divisions, ethnic and class differentiation involved in shopping expedition, and feelings of of foreignness and inadequacy when faced with the "West" in Trieste.

Key words: everyday socialism, consumption, memory, culture of shortages, needs and desires, surveillance, border crossing.

Memory and the study of “normal exceptions”¹

Among the strongest individual memories of life under state socialism was the lack of desired goods, the “culture” of shortages, and the “dictatorship” over needs. My aim is to examine the experience of the culture of shortages in a society of “really existing socialism” at the micro level: I will investigate the regular shopping trips by Yugoslavs to the Italian border town of Trieste. The paper analyzes the formal properties of the cultural practice of “going shopping to Trieste” between 1955 and the end of 1960s, which is to say during the period of hard-line socialism, and draws on personal memories of former shoppers. I will treat these shopping expeditions as a meaningful cultural practice and cultural phenomenon that became a quasi-institutionalized tradition in the late 1950s, when the border between capitalist Italy and the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia began to gradually open up. Open borders strengthened the status of Yugoslavia as an alternative to the “people's democracy” of really existing socialism. Over time, seasonal shopping trips to Italy became frequent and regular social events; they developed into a mass shopping frenzy in the 1970s, and continued until the dissolution of Yugoslavia.²

Shopping expeditions to Trieste were not just a social practice of obtaining needed and desired goods, but also a cultural phenomenon. The number of people who crossed the border to do their regular seasonal shopping increased from year to year, and hours-long waits at the border crossings with Italy and the authoritarian and unpredictable behavior of border police did not discourage the shoppers. Between 1960 and 1969 the number of border-shoppers increased tenfold. According to official statistics, in 1959, for instance, 1,597,792 people crossed the border, in 1963 the number had increased to 3,678,814, and by 1965 to more than 11,000,000.³ By the mid-1970s the journey to Trieste had become a monthly or at least seasonal affair for the majority of the Yugoslav population. Seasonal shopping in Italy, especially in Trieste, became such an important part of the consumer and material culture in Yugoslavia that it should be treated as a cultural practice, and the articulation of a specific moral economy where social relations are shaped by obtaining, using, exchanging, and creating of the social meaning of material artifacts.

On the one hand, I wish to outline the formal characteristics of the “shopping expedition to Trieste” that constitute the phenomenology of the practice: from the buying of hard currency and the reciprocal relations within the gray or second economy connected with

shopping to the anticipation of the journey, the symbolic value and the public meaning of goods. On the other hand we were also interested in the “hidden transcripts of power” (Scott 1990) during the relatively hard times of socialism and political regulation of needs: the black market, smuggling, communicative strategies and tactics of shoppers on crossing the border, and gender divisions and ethnic and class differentiation involved in shopping practices.

The paper draws on 40 life-story in-depth interviews.⁴ By interviewing members of a generation that experienced the earliest Yugoslav shopping expeditions to Italy in the late 1950s and 1960s, we excavate memories of a special form of consumption under Yugoslav socialism. Focusing on cross-border shopping, smuggling brought back not only memories of desires, needs and scarcity, but also the related, often traumatic, experiences of the informants with political power and ideology. Memories of scarcity, desires, symbolic meaning of goods, of a system of interaction between border officials and shoppers/smugglers and of the erratic and authoritarian behavior of the border police, for instance, powerlessness, resistance, and disobedience, mingle with recollections of foreignness and inadequacy when faced with the “West” in Trieste. . We consider the everyday and the ordinary not as a footnote to social or political history, but as being at the very center of relationships of economic, political, symbolic power.

Needs and desires

Consumer culture is an inseparable part of the economic, political and cultural aspects of modernity. It is incompatible with traditional or the political regulation of consumption, but each society formally and informally regulates the circulation of commodities. This means that it sets the rules with respect to the kinds of things which can be exchanged on the market, those which are excluded from the market and perhaps “sacralized,” (Kopytoff 1997) and the conditions and means of exchange. In short, demand for products as an articulation of culturally constituted needs and desires is always culturally, legally, and economically regulated. Thus the indirect control of demand, either by means of taboos or economic policy, is a universal characteristic of societies. Socialism on the other hand represents a political and social project and a form of economic organization characterized not only by cultural, legal, and economic constraints and control of demand, but also direct political forms of disciplining and limiting demand, i.e., the political and ideological “dictatorship over needs.” Political control over needs under socialism is the result of the essentialist view of human needs and

the division of needs into real ones and false ones. This division legitimizes a specific moral economy and conceptualization of authentic life which can be used as a basis for classifying some needs as more, and others as less, authentic.

It is a sociological truism today that individual preferences, needs, and consumption practices always take shape in a culture and within a certain way of life and can never be defined universally outside the specific culture (see for example Douglas and Isherwood, 1979, Slater, 1997, Miller 1997).⁵ Even “basic needs” such as food or shelter are always empirically accessible only in specific cultural forms they take and are at the same time discursive, that is constitutive, for the “needed subject”. Or, as Doyal and Gough (1991:18) have put it, “...needs are embodied in culturally variable ‘discursive position’, which constitute the individual subject. Culture thus constitutes needs and practice of consumption; these practices and needs, as “technologies of self,” (see M. Foucault, 1984: 369) on the other hand, constitute the historical subject. According to Slater (1997: 135), a definition of real needs is always an articulation of a definition of the good life, of the way we imagine how we should live. It comprises a reflection of how material and symbolic social resources are to be organized in relation to the definition of the good life and to values implied by it. Basic needs can therefore be defined not as those that sustain us as physical beings and satisfy our pre-existing biological needs, but as those needs that are necessary conditions of our cultural participation, as argued also by Doyal and Gough (1991). The necessity, thus, to which responded the need of a socialist consumer to have a Vespa, Italian shoes or nice underwear, is fundamentally social and political. Clearly, as argued by Castoriadis (1997), in order to survive, we have to always create imaginary or symbolic forms beyond the purely functional ones.

In socialist Yugoslavia--at least during the first ten years after the war--demand and consumption were regularly subjected to social definitions and control by direct political appeals, by law, or by an economic policy that translated political and economic controls into consumer demands. In the 1940s and 1950s, citizens of Yugoslavia were encouraged to defer consumption as a moral and political duty. But where there is power there is also resistance: the political control of demand in socialism was constantly threatened by oppositional behavior that redefined the classification of needs into false needs on the one hand and authentic needs on the other, and thereby challenged the dominant definition of the good life and official formulation of values and commitments. Shopping trips to the Italian city of Trieste may be understood as such a practice. For instance, our informants went shopping to

Trieste to buy socks, nylon stockings, and Italian shoes, but also dolls and soft wool twin-sets, bicycles and fabrics, blankets and washing machines, Vespas, and fashionable underwear. These alleged luxury goods should not be regarded as such in contrast to necessities, but rather as "marking services", a notion used by Douglas and Isherwood (1996) as the opposite of "physical services" to emphasize the essentially social character of these goods – they are needed for mustering solidarity, exclusion, differentiation. They are goods that enable cultural participation and "whose principal use is rhetorical and social, goods that are simply incarnated signs" (Appadurai, 1996:38). An Italian bicycle is just a physical object when observed independently of any system of social relations. But it is a luxury commodity and an object of aesthetic contemplation within a specific discursive configuration. The luxury status of a commodity, thus, is not the result of the intrinsic properties of the artifact, but the effect of its place within a determinate system of social relations, including the "register" of its consumption which is defined by restricted access to luxury and its close connection with identity, subjectivity and the body. In this sense, these goods only responded to a fundamentally political necessity and, thus, represented an opposition to the order that operated on the official concept of needs. Beyond need and as a sign of personal autonomy, the experience of consumption of goods acquired in Trieste may serve as a resource in the construction of individual and social identities, while on the other hand, border crossings represented the spaces of discipline and surveillance.

The making of a middle class

Shopping expeditions to Trieste as a particular aspect of consumer culture that emerged at the end of the 1950s depended as much on political democratization and the open border with Italy as its consequence as on cultural and social transformations, including a certain standard of living that redefined the value of needs and, consequently, the definition of a "good life." We start with a brief examination of Yugoslav economic and social changes in the late 1950s and 1960s, the conditions of the modernization processes in socialism, and the making of the (socialist) middle class. Statistics on economic growth show that between 1953 and 1964 Yugoslavia grew faster than any other country in the world.⁶ The increased productivity brought a certain degree of prosperity which could not be overlooked, especially if compared with other Eastern European countries. The fast-growing Yugoslav economy became known as an "economic miracle," which was a result of many structural changes influenced by industrialization, urbanization, and modernization in general. Consumer goods consumption

rose faster than in any other country of “really existing socialism.” In 1965, for instance, Yugoslavia had more motor vehicles per capita than some of the people’s democracies where national income and per capita consumption were substantially higher. Saving deposits increased twenty-five times between 1955 and 1965 and helped keep demand for consumer goods at a high level, thus making it less dependent on current incomes. Moreover, by 1965 the possession of durable goods represented a much more significant element of personal wealth than at any time since the Second World War. In Yugoslavia the index of consumption per capita rose from 103.6 in 1954 to 130.1 in 1957.⁷

These economic processes were accompanied by social and cultural transformation, including a certain rearrangement of social groups: differentiation, urbanization, and industrialization necessarily brought along new modes of community, new forms of social etiquette in the cities, and a distinctive new sociality or “structure of feeling” (Williams 1992). Moreover, new forms of self-understanding and self-cultivation—in short, new forms of individuality with distinctive ways of life—were emerging. The increased differentiation in earnings and occupational reclassification were only one aspect of the changes in a “social opportunity structure.” The latter—as a social-structural process that opens up social space for class differentiation—is comprised of educational, income, life-style, and occupational elements. A class structure based on the “quantity of competence,” as Klaus Eder would put it, starts to emerge, while education and lifestyle differentiation rather than income mark barriers between social classes (Eder 1993: 76).⁸ The result of the changes in the “social opportunity structure” is an emerging middle class with a specific internal differentiation and enough available economic and cultural capital (qualifications, taste, and morals) to be spent on “marking services.” For instance, the “Italianness” of products (fashion clothes and shoes, Vespa scooters, home design and decoration) epitomized everything trendy, chic, modern, cosmopolitan, and international. These were the products to have, and they were part of an emerging tendency of using material goods as a means of representation, thus turning everyday existence into a symbolic display of taste and social affiliation and accepting everyday surroundings as the terrain for cultural distinction.⁹

Following our theoretical reasoning, the new middle class consisted of the first Yugoslav generation shaped by the socialist modernization process, and marked, among others, by free access to education and full-time employment for most women. The various groups of this generation are by their position bound to ‘individualization.’ Consequently, as Bourdieu would call it, the ethos of necessity and morality of self-sacrifice and duty started to be replaced by the ethos of desire and fun morality (Bourdieu 2000: 367). The concern for the

"seeming" is constitutive of the middle classes, and the phenomenon of cultural meaning and cultural production becomes an important factor in a vertical classification. Clearly, shopping expeditions to Trieste depended as much on the political changes and open border with Italy as on the transformation of the concept of the self and of the good life. This backstage and only semi-legal consumer culture was the result of a new structure of feeling characterized by changed identities and commitments. Essential to this structure of feeling was the privatization of the notion of "the good life." As noted previously, needs are discursive positions that articulate and constitute the collectivity and the individual subject. Therefore, shopping expeditions to Trieste were not only the result of an emerging middle class in Yugoslavia, but also a practice that constituted the middle class - thus a "technology of the constitution of the self" - through the practices of consumption.

Dreamworld of consumption

1) Before Trieste: the network of reciprocal relations

It is impossible to understand the nature of formal organizations without investigating the networks of informal relations and unofficial norms and describing how informal, unofficial rules govern the daily operation of organizations or local subcultures. What are the distinctive characteristics of shopping expeditions that define them as part of the networks of informal relations and unofficial norms in socialism? Shopping expeditions were not part of everyday routine shopping experiences but were planned, aspired to, and imagined long before the actual journey. A result of a "dictatorship over needs" in socialism was the formation of a new, semi-legal space in which the consumer first had to create access to opportunities for exchanging goods. This informal or backstage sphere of cultural and economic exchange includes a whole range of practices, social relations, interactions, forms of communication in micro situations, new forms and new spaces for asserting power and new forms of hierarchies. In order to take place at all, the shopping expeditions had to be part of clientelistic ties, of an informal network of reciprocal personal relations, and of a second or shadow economy that enabled the "good life" (Eder 1993: 181) and were, thus, a significant part of sociability in socialism. The exchange of goods and services in personalized relations was characteristic for Eastern Europe socialism in general. According to Lonkila, 1997 (in Misztal, 2000: 224) the network of informal relations, where people used their relatives, friends, acquaintances, colleagues at work, to obtain the desired or needed products and services (such as favors or

important information), was a significant aspect of sociability in socialism. These backstage networks grew into a second society where the mediated and personalized forms of social life transformed replaceable social relationships into the personal and unique (instead of a doctor you have an acquaintance who is a doctor, instead of going to a bank in order to exchange your money into Italian liras, German marks or any other hard currency, your friend's colleague who had relatives abroad was exchanging your money for foreign currency to earn some extra money, etc.). The gray economy and informalization of the economy, accompanied by a reciprocal exchange of favors, information and goods unavailable on the market, instrumentalization of sociability, clientelistic and patron-client relations - all these result in particularism and in a culture of privatism that are a constituent part of the social integration in socialism. Or, as one of our female respondents, responsible for the reproduction of the reciprocity network, said, it enabled her family's "good life":

"You had to have somebody who could do the sewing, somebody who did the knitting, crocheting, somebody to buy smuggled things from, somebody to buy hard currency, then someone in the shop who was prepared to give you an imported item 'under the counter'..."

The reciprocity networks were a semi-public space, the extension of a domestic sphere. It is thus not surprising that establishing, reproducing and maintaining the reciprocity of networks remained women's work in spite of the practically full employment of women in many parts of Yugoslavia, and their concomitant economic independence. The backdrop of the domestic revolution and of changes in organizing family economies, where a major shift from housework as production to housework as consumption took place, remained women's responsibility for their family economy, and shopping became an important aspect of housework (consuming as "doing for others"), reflecting a specifically feminine cultural competence through which a patriarchal order was expressed, while masculine domination remained unquestioned.

This, of course, shouldn't surprise us, as most of the research on consumer practices establishes the gendered nature of "shopping" and the association between shopping and femininity. The female character of shopping is an articulation of the symbolic cleavage between production and consumption and the equation of men with production and women with consumption in western societies. Shopping, together with window-shopping, with just-

looking and browsing, is here, thus, a practice with a recreational value possessing value in itself. Our interviews confirm that women were much more engaged and competent shoppers than men. Female respondents were regularly shopping in the company of other women, looking forward to shopping trips and combined shopping expeditions to Trieste with socializing, and establishing and confirming a social relationship and, in general, using shopping expeditions also as means to other ends, not just acquiring goods. Purchases for others, bringing items to those who could not come along, expressed a relationship between the shopper and a particular other (children, partner, or family in general). Schudson argues, that "...an enormous portion of total consumption, for necessities as well as for luxury items, must be understood as preeminently social in nature, not individualistic or crudely materialistic or connected to trends towards narcissism." (M. Schudson 1984: 141). Miller (1987: 12) also argues against the thesis of consumption as individual and individualized practice. Rather, the act of buying goods is mainly directed at two forms of 'otherness': the first expresses a relationship between the shopper and a particular other (children, partner, family in general), the second a relationship to a more general goal – which takes the form of the values to which people wish to dedicate themselves. Numerous female interviewees were talking of buying for others, for loved ones.¹⁰ Shopping is thus the construction of the other as a subject who desires something (see Miller 1998: 148). The purpose of shopping is not so much to purchase things that a person wants, but to establish a relationship with those who want things. Consumption in its essence was thus an expression of a social relationship, not a private and atomized act. Like the creation and maintenance of reciprocal relationships, the practice of shopping was not gender-neutral, but rather linked to the feminine role in the household as the unit of consumption. The reminiscences of female informants were much more likely than those of males to make reference to anticipating the needs and desires of significant others: [...] *I brought something for Mama and for Papa, some slippers for Mama, warm ones, for winter, I bought things sometimes for another person, sometimes for my sister. [...] I thought about what I could get for each person.*

By contrast, male discourse on shopping, together with the things that they bought in Italy and regarded themselves as responsible for (electrical goods, home tools and do-it-yourself shopping in general), confirm the notion of masculinity (see Lunt in Livingstone 1992, Campbell 1997). Male respondents were inclined to see shopping as a peripheral activity and interpreted shopping trips to Italy as instrumental and as a purchase-driven activity related to the satisfaction of supposedly "basic needs" for goods unavailable at

home. Their role in shopping expeditions was justified by their role in acquiring “important” commodities, or satisfying “basic” needs, (such as bicycles, bicycle spare tires unavailable at home, Vespas, and, later, spare parts for a family car, car tires and important family purchases such as washing machines and gramophones), instead of clothing.¹¹ The interviews thus reconstructed the ideology of shopping, which served to maintain a consensus between shopping and traditional concepts of masculinity and femininity.¹² The masculine practice of shopping was thus placed in the framework of work and was based on the rhetoric of needs, while the feminine practice of shopping was placed in the framework of entertainment, free time, and satisfaction of desires. However, due to a specific situation (extraordinary circumstances and the unavoidable encounter with authority and the foreign), the gendering of shopping in Trieste was less than in ordinary, routine shopping. On the one hand the male role was, due to the spectacular and extraordinary nature of shopping trips to Trieste, more important than in routine shopping trips: men were important as drivers, protectors, escorts, money-changers, and mediators in relations with border authorities, and in this way participated in shopping while still maintaining their traditional role.

"He (the husband)... simply sat in the car while I was running around to get goods for the whole family. He took a walk, and would not want to even buy his own shoes. Once the shoes I bought for him were a little small, but he kept them anyway..."

On the other hand women were also compelled to take the practice of shopping from a free-time activity, which implies not just the act of buying but includes, as stated above, also browsing, window-shopping, and daydreaming, that is, from an expressive and aesthetic pleasure to a pragmatic conclusion: the purchase of everything unavailable back at home or until the money was spent. But clearly, women's responsibility for the family economy and shopping, despite changes in the organization of the family economy, became an important aspect of family labor. Despite the revolution in the private sphere, the male dominant position was unaffected: as with cooking and household chores, shopping also now took on the form of work “for others” and through this specifically female cultural competence the patriarchal order was expressed and reproduced.

2) Crossing the border: surveillance and domination through communication

Shopping trips were made up of a whole range of communicative interactions in which positions of superiority and subordination, power and powerlessness, class and ethnic differences, were established: the interactional order of reciprocal relations in the gray market of money and goods, communication at the border, interaction in Italian shops, the symbolic meaning of “western” artifacts, and so on. Crossing the border was one of the most important microsituations of the shopping trip. Because power exists as long as it is exercised by subjects in communication, we cannot say that power relations are expressed through interactional patterns, but that crossing the state border communicatively produces power relations. In Foucault's terms, crossing the border was a disciplinary practice through which the reality of power relations was produced and not just exercised. Buying foreign currency on the black market, smuggling money to Italy, queuing for a few hours to cross the border, smuggling goods back home, communication with the border officer, ... in short, the interactive order of the institution “crossing the border,” was the most significant part of the entire expedition. Restrictions for exporting money and importing goods were extremely unrealistic, and customs regulations changed frequently enough so that the majority of informants emphasized their unpredictability. While smuggling money into Italy and goods back to Yugoslavia violated the law in both directions, it was, nevertheless, an important part of the expedition. On the other hand, however, “everything was allowed which was not explicitly prohibited” (Stark in Misztal, 2000: 207). In practice, official and formal rules did not operate and formal rules did not support informal behavior. The roots of the informal system were embedded in the formal organization itself and nurtured by the formality of its arrangements. The lack of predictability, the absence of positive rules or of the non-enforcement of formal rules and the arbitrariness of customs officials regarding law enforcement all contributed to the individualization of power (good vs. bad customs officers, informal conduct reserved for officers), to the feeling of uncertainty and risk taking, and to the internalization of restraint. As citizens were treated as suspicious and guilty in advance, they were constantly under surveillance. The high degree of unpredictability meant that anybody could be defined as a criminal at any time and the arbitrariness of authority became the central principle of the exercising of power, as the stories on good and bad border officers or memories of “how lucky I was,” “how I managed to outfox the authorities,” or “how I got nabbed” testify:

"At times customs officials were insolent, they wanted to see everything, and at other times they just let us go, it was a matter of luck."

"One woman was telling us that she bought God knows how many sweaters and put on all of them to hide them from the customs official. He searched all her bags and then asked her if she was too warm, and smiled."

"A lady from our neighborhood bought a blanket with those tassels, and she fixed it under her skirt but the tassels dangled from underneath her skirt so the official told her that she should cut them off. But he didn't tell her anything else."

Usually they asked if we had something to declare and we said 'nothing.' Everybody said 'nothing.' I thought it was so funny, how could you say 'nothing' if you knew you had things to declare. But if they didn't ask directly, like 'what is this,' we kept silent. Or, we said, yes, we have bought some trifle, like souvenirs. If the custom official was good, he said 'OK,' and we went through. And then we laughed.

The narrative reconstructions of the communication between the border officers and the informants/shoppers, who were always also smugglers, are among the most emotional topics of the interviews. They are also the most interesting from the point of view of how power was exercised through communication and performance in the process of border crossing. Memories of the respondents demonstrate that the arbitrariness of the customs officers or policemen and their individualized power were the central episode in the shopping expedition. The antagonistic opposition between the official and unofficial sphere, the private and public sphere, and private and public language, as the most important structural element of the societies of "really existing socialism," has defined the interactional order/practices in public. An important aspect of interaction was the lack of civility of customs officials and policemen to citizens/shoppers. The lack of civility refers to the absence of "civil indifference", that "treats others as if they were strangers and creates social ties on the basis of this social distance. "¹³ The experience of arbitrary power and the experience of one's own

powerlessness when crossing the state borders can be interpreted as a collective trauma of smaller proportions. For traumas to emerge at the level of collectivity, the individual memory has to be objectified through the representational process and thereby transformed into a collective one. Among generations of Yugoslav shoppers, trauma remains in a latent stage as personal memory and commonality of experience of "victims" and as a somatization/embodiment of relations of domination and of the experience of arbitrary power.¹⁴

"I still tremble when I cross the border even if I have nothing to declare. I still feel like a criminal who has something to hide."

3) Strategy of the state and tactics of the citizens

The arbitrariness of power of customs official reported by our respondents was just an articulation of the absence of power among shoppers and resulted in the development of various informal tactics in the process of adjusting to the unpredictability of customs officers. These tactics included the way one should walk and talk to customs officials in order not to provoke them, what kind of register to use in order to be let through without paying customs, where to hide money and goods, or how to package or wear purchases. De Certeau's distinction between "strategies" and "tactics" (1984: xix) is useful for the conceptualization of the phenomenon of communicative construction of power when shoppers were crossing the state border into Italy. According to de Certeau, strategy as the manipulation of power relationships becomes possible when a subject of power (in our case a state power operating at border crossings) can be isolated from the "environment" and has a place of its own and can therefore determine the relationship with the outside Other (citizens-shoppers). Strategy is thus a function of space, while tactic, by contrast, is determined by the absence of a place of its own: "The space of a tactic is the space of the other" and "within the enemy's field of vision" (ibid., 37).¹⁵ The smuggling tactics of citizens-shoppers and the trickery concerning the communication with the border officials (from body posture to speech utterance) therefore operated on the imposed territory that belonged to the other - to the state and border officials as its representatives. They were determined by the absence of the power of the shoppers.¹⁶ The expeditions to Italy and tactical practices of shoppers-smugglers were operating within the framework determined by the state, and were therefore contributing to the system rather than subverting it. They were, as de Certeau would put it, "a certain game with the system of

defined space” [...], “a maneuver within the enemy's field of vision [...] and within enemy territory” (de Certeau 1984: 36–37). The shoppers simply made use of cracks opened by particular conjunctions in the surveillance of proprietary powers. These tactics have found their expression in an oral culture of gossiping about good and bad border crossings, good and bad customs officers, recommended tactics of smuggling, or proper behavior at border crossings. Oral culture was at the heart of the institution of shopping expeditions as seasonal potlatches. Although the art of the weak, and determined by the absence of power, the tactics were practices which the strategy of the authorities had not been able to domesticate. They were, however, not an opposition to the system, but the value of a tactic is symbolic: it demonstrates that strategic surveillance and power can never be complete.

In cigarette boxes, we opened them, then glued them back. Then in shoes, heels. We also ripped coats and stitched it inside. Then in shoe heels, I even took my shoes to the shoe maker to make a hole in the heel so I put money in it... I have to admit that we smuggled as many things as we could ... And if we went by car we hid money in the back light.

... on the train we put clothes on and put things around and pretended they were not ours. And if they asked whose bag it was, we were silent.

All sorts of things, in the wallet, underneath the lining... As I said, I was never searched like that. But you were always scared because you saw them searching others. If they found money, they took all of it, they left nothing. They even, there was this man from the south, he wore a belt and stuffed money inside. Everybody used tricks. They had those brushes with handles, empty, and money inside. And he came, pulled out that handle and took it out. They even put money into bread.

4) In Trieste: work and pleasure

Although they share some common formal characteristics with tourism as an experience and as a cultural and social phenomenon, such as, for example, the anticipation that is constructed and sustained before the departure, the notion of ‘departure’, and a scopic regime characteristic for tourism (see Urry, 1990), shopping trips, however, are not to be interpreted

as a tourist cultural practice.¹⁷ Typically, the Yugoslav shoppers in Trieste were under time pressure, and the shopping expedition was thus experienced as a calculated work, which involved discipline and control to stroll through goods on display, not as a hedonistic strolling, browsing, and shopping. There were very few flâneurs, city dwellers, browsers, or simply tourists among Yugoslav shoppers. Trieste was not perceived as a Mediterranean city worthy of a tourist's gaze, but rather a sort of theme park--and a source of pictures of the good life and of fascination--which offered spectacular imagery. Time limitation available for shopping and a necessity to purchase wanted or needed goods required the capacity to manage swings between intense involvement and more distanced, aesthetic detachment. Even when Italian shops closed for lunch (between 1 and 4 p.m.) and shopping had to stop, Yugoslavs did not go for lunch and rarely went for a coffee, but engaged in window shopping to plan their afternoon purchases.

Never in those twenty years did we eat there, or drink, never. It was a terrible waste of money. We had food with us [...] that was, for example, three pairs of stockings less.

Shopping was not a recreational practice as with tourist shoppers, who have a dual orientation, gazing both at the urban setting and at the goods on display in shops (see Urry, 1995). A purchase had a central role for shoppers coming to Trieste from really existing socialism. The movement of shoppers was entirely goal-directed. They were moving faster than tourist-shoppers, and were, typically, almost running around the town. Many informants remember that all available money had to be spent prior to their return, which transformed the pleasure of shopping and strolling around town into real work and/or into destructive consumption and excessive expenditure at the same time. Many times it barely mattered what was purchased as long as the money was spent.

According to Miller even for the wealthy the most important shopping experience is the experience of saving, where the value of commodity bought becomes not what it costs but what it saved. Thrift is, according to him, instrumental in creating a sense of future purpose that justifies present deferments (Miller, 1998: 104). The practice of shopping itself, thus, means spending, but shopping as experience means saving. The experience of saving has, of course, nothing to do with real saving. However, the shopping expeditions to Trieste were outside the boundaries of everyday social life and were the transgression of the ordinary, everyday, and routine shopping. Shopping became de-contextualized from social life, and the

shopper engaged in self-indulgence, for only immediate gratification could have replaced the absence of the future purpose that justifies deferment and saving as an inherent part of the shopping experience (see Miller, *ibidem*). The expeditions to Trieste brought to extremes the contradictory relationship between the practice of spending and the experience of saving, on which consumption is based.

Sometimes we didn't know what to buy but we had to go – we had 5000 lira to spend but we rushed around the town for so long that we spent those liras without looking for something specific, because we didn't get a chance to decide what we actually needed, we just looked at things, at what they had, weighing what could be a good buy. Later on [...] I bought a ball.

It was better to buy something, whatever, than nothing [...] Because that was it for the next six months.

... others finished their shopping, but I couldn't decide. Will you take the money back home?

The expeditions to Trieste were generally a laborious activity executed under the constraint of necessity and social control, but they were also part of a culture of semi-legal hedonism, indulgence, and unconstrained freedom from restraints of the identities and everyday life in socialism. Shopping was therefore directed at the pragmatics of provisioning, but also at dreaming in a space where the objects of desire reminded consumers who they wished they were and how they wished they lived, and enabled them to fantasize about themselves as someone else. It was, thus, primarily a cultural activity, in which people became audiences who moved through spectacular imagery. The act of buying was just the tip of a much deeper experience of shopping as a cultural practice.

Trieste was a theme park, a set of spectacular images of “the good life” and visual fascination, and the shoppers the audience that was moving among spectacular images and establishing its own paths in the city, its own spatial narratives. The shopping, however, includes visual pleasures and is in this respect closer to the viewing of pictures in a gallery than to buying. The mere act of buying should be understood in the context of the process of shopping, browsing, touching, window shopping, further, in the context of the experience of shopping as cultural practice and, lastly, within the broader context of the urban experience that includes the visual dimension of shopping. Just observing the merchandise on display,

being with things, the experience of a visually relatively glamorous city and its inhabitants compared to conditions under socialism, becoming familiar with the goods, the acquisition of the necessary cultural capital and skills of discrimination, planning, dreaming, imagining oneself as someone else, establishing an emotional relationship towards the merchandise and relationships with others through merchandise, the freedom of choice and from the restraints of the “dictatorship over needs” ... all this was part of the Trieste cultural practice of shopping.

There were Lambreta motor bikes, Vespa motor bikes, young men from rich families already had cars, and our young women in the first place found that alluring, but so did we, men, we were watching them, observing things.

"We put money aside all throughout the year, because you could not get anything in Ljubljana. I remember that you had to pay 5,600 dinars for shoes, and my salary was 3,000 dinars. So Trieste was like sunshine."

"They had nice textiles. It was not yet like that. Shoes, everything was nicer down there."

"The first experience – we were highly curious, that was in the year '56... what in fact there was there... Well, shops were packed with things while here you couldn't get anything; motor vehicles were all the rage at that time, you could see motor bikes of all sorts, nice motor bikes, so we felt like we arrived at some other place, different from here, like we were in a rich country, even though we were their first neighbors."

In 1958, I was graduating at that time, and I had already bought an Italian jacket, and a yellow sweater, that my mother bought for me at that time.

Vespas came out in 1956 and came to Ljubljana around 1960. At that time the “hochstaplers” (\ “cool people”) in Ljubljana already had Vespas.

[...] and slippers, made of felt uppers and rubber soles, winter ones with a zipper. If you didn't have a pair, you weren't civilized, you had to have a pair of slippers like that.

Photo No. 1: Shoppers are packaging smuggled goods before crossing the border to Yugoslavia

Photos Nos. 2 and 3: Two “Hochstaplers”: a new Vespa smuggled from Italy in 1961

As a ludic social form, shopping is thus closely associated with modern urban subjectivity and with fantasizing about “being as someone else” (Lehtonen and Mäenpää in Falk and Campbell, 1997: 160). This inner world only constitutes shopping as daydreaming and the state “to be here for oneself” in an “as if” situation (Campbell 1987: 198). Sociability itself as offered by shopping thus contributes to the illusion that one can choose within the crowd any self that one wishes. Thus the feeling of well-being and the excitement which arise from the potential elimination of boundaries to the self are thus of fundamental importance, such that at the core of this ideal shopping experience is the feeling of freedom and erasing of limits that everyday life places on the self. Yet, the universal historical experience of women as being-perceived and the discrepancy between their real and their ideal self foster the need to imagine “oneself as someone else,” which is made possible by the experience of shopping. On the other hand, however, material artifacts and competence in using them, (i.e. to decorate oneself and one's environment and thereby the sexualization of oneself), then invite the male gaze, become the objects of the female voyeuristic aesthetic gaze, and “just looking” becomes an important part of female subjectivity. On the other hand, women, themselves the objects of the objectifying gaze, take the active position of observer in the practice of shopping and apply the objectifying gaze to the material objects of desire, similarly as male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure. Strolling around, usually in the company of other women, and the pleasure in looking at objects that are styled to be looked at, is a constituent part of “female” shopping and has a key role in the shopping experience - - this has not only the role of acquiring information about the merchandise on the market, or the role of socializing, as

noted previously. Only in the process of strolling around and looking at things can occur “the experience of ‘longing,’ which generates ‘wanting,’ as Campbell (1997: 170) puts it.

Conclusion: shame and cultural hegemony of the West

The culture of shopping expeditions should not be understood as a mere economically motivated consequence of unsatisfied needs of the emerging middle class. The middle class was constituted by shopping as cultural practice and through the consumption of “marketing services” as indicators of cultural competence. As a social carrier of aesthetic knowledge and cultural capital, the middle classes have played the role of cultural intermediaries. However, in the 1970s shopping expeditions expanded to include all social classes, while at the same time a hierarchy and differentiation among shoppers took shape. Class differentiation was expressed through the spatial segregation of shoppers in Trieste and in the character of the expeditions: traveling by car or, on the other hand, in always crowded trains, visiting a café or a pub in Trieste, or, on the other hand, eating a sandwich brought from home in the city park, shopping for oneself, or shopping for exchange on the black market, buying in posh Italian shops or in cheap discount stores and open markets.¹⁸

The expeditions made visible what was normally hidden and officially repressed. For instance, the close proximity of ethnicities (Slovenes, Serbians, Bosnians, Kosovo Albanians, etc.), otherwise rarely in contact with each other, made ethnic and/or class differences visible. According to our interviews, ethnic differentiation (Slovenes vs. “Southerners”) was a constitutive part of the cultural practice of shopping in Trieste. Hierarchical categories regarding an understanding of self (Slovenes) and others (“Southerners”), civilized and less civilized, were regularly expressed by Slovene informants. Furthermore, many informants reported experiences feelings of shame and embarrassment that arose from discrepancies in dress between Slovenes/Yugoslavs on the one hand, and Italians on the other. Indeed, the definitional threshold for what is old and worn out was inevitably higher in socialist Yugoslavia than in Italy. The shame was articulated partly through the ambition of Slovenes to set themselves apart from “Southerners,” who joined the shopping expeditions at the end of 1960s and who looked even poorer than Slovene shoppers. The “more civilized” were ashamed of the “less civilized.”

We are ashamed because we were so poorly turned out. At that time, at the end of the 1950s, Italians were already wearing casual outfits, khaki pants, polo shirts, while we had heavy wool suits made by tailors and ties. We dressed up as best we could when we went but it was immediately obvious that we were from Yugoslavia.

When you got to the other side you saw a different life, different people, a different language. People there were well-groomed, their faces always looked so rested and happy, while we were glum and worn out by work...

"At that time we had enough to go to a coffee shop, there was a coffeehouse north of Ponte Rosso, so we could afford a coke or a cup of coffee. But those from the south sprawled on the grass and took out those ... and ate."

Characteristic of the experience of shame mentioned by many interviewees is that it has little to do with the nature of the situation or even with the characteristics of the person feeling it, but rather arises from the socially dominant classification and is intensified, actualized, and embodied in the individual situation and self-perception: shame is always present where difference is converted into hierarchy. Social shame comes from the acceptance of the criteria of the Other and the application of these criteria to oneself. In this sense it is the result of the western orientalization of easterners. As adjustment to the norms of the Other (subjectification) and internalization of these norms (i.e., self-disciplining), shame emanates from the cultural hegemony of the West, and is a source of symbolic surveillance and domination. The source of shame is therefore social, the experience of shame, however, is subjective and embodied. The dependence on the evaluation of the others is of constitutive importance for the identity of the "easterners" and produces a specific subjectivity. Shopping in Italy became, thus, a permanent state of bodily insecurity and symbolic dependence for many Slovene/Yugoslav shoppers, who existed through Western eyes. They anticipated an evaluation by the Western other and were condemned to the judgmental gaze of the other, which constituted them as poor Slovenes/Yugoslavs.

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Endnotes:

¹ Actions that violate certain norms, but do so routinely. See Bell's contribution on microhistory in Kramer and Maza (eds.), 2002.

² The border between Italy and Yugoslavia that was hermetically sealed after the Second World War opened partially for crossings in 1955. The border opened more widely in 1967 when visas were abolished (Pirjevec, 1995: 255).

³ See *Statistical Yearbook of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia*, Statistical Office of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia, Ljubljana, 1964, p. 260.

⁴ From 2001 until 2003 46 open interviews were conducted and respondents' family photos collected. 20 additional interviews were done in 2004 and 2005.

⁵ Or, as Slater argues, "In stating a need, we are making a claim to a way of life." And further: "Real needs' are rather the way in which particular real people and communities formulate their values, identities, commitments in terms of what they 'need' in order to live a kind of life they deem good." (Slater in Nava et al., 1997:55, 57).

⁶ Economic growth between 1953 and 1964 was 12.7% and among the highest in the world. The standard of living was lower in Yugoslavia during 1950-53 than anywhere else in Eastern Europe with the exception of Albania. The prewar average level of consumption per capita was regained only in 1954. See Kaser, 1986:38.

⁷ See Kaser, 1986:46, table 24.2. These are index numbers of per capita consumption. In general the consumption increased as a share of in national income, and in absolute terms in all Eastern European countries at the time.

⁸ Consequently, as argued by Eder (1993: 90), in order to modernize the concept of class we have to take into account the increasing relevance of culture for the objective as well as the subjective side of class.

⁹ It should be noted, however, that Yugoslav middle class youth's perception of Italy was just part of a more general mythology of good Italian taste and a shared predilection for Italian culture by a younger generation of Europe in the 1950s and 1960s. In Britain, Vespa

scooters became an identity marker for the Mods subculture in 1958-59. On Italianicity of the British youth culture of the late 1950s, see Hebdige, 1988. Contrary to British Vespa owners or Mods who were predominantly from working- class or lower middle-class backgrounds, in Yugoslavia Vespa owners were older (according to eyewitness reports from 25 to 35 years of age) and well-educated urban youth.

¹⁰ Miller convincingly links between modern consumption and the ritual of sacrifice in traditional societies, which shows that the connection between shopping and capitalism is more indirect than shown by the more simplistic theory of “the consumer society.”

¹¹ According to data from the federal customs administration, during the first nine months of 1966 22,500 washing machines, 13,000 cars, 8000 sewing machines, 1900 televisions and 2000 tape recorders were imported into Yugoslavia (*Delo* (Ljubljana), 31 December 1966). This of course refers only to goods on which customs were paid.

¹² Or, as Campbell (1997: 170-1) put it, men were attempting to “assimilate shopping to a work frame while females assimilate it to a leisure one”, sharply distinguishing it from rationality and instrumentalism of work. While men are more inclined to see shopping as instrumental and purchase-driven, women are more likely to view it as a pleasure-seeking activity, where “a fundamentally aesthetic and expressive gratification is involved” (Campbell, 1997:170).

¹³ Civility has in English etymological roots in *city* in *civilization*. It has to do with protecting oneself against unknown others while maintaining the illusion of community and shared experience. See Sennett 1989: 350. On the problem of sociability and social integration typical for socialism, see the excellent book by Myszal, 2000. On civil indifference see Goffman, 1971 and Giddens, 1991:46-47.

¹⁴ On the concept of cultural trauma see Alexander et. al., 2004.

¹⁵ A panoptic practice is enabled by the division of space: foreign forces can be transformed into objects that can be observed and measured, and thus controlled. The architectural construction of border crossings between Yugoslavia and Italy enabled the panoptic practice: border crossings were built to enable the visual surveillance of long lines of shoppers waiting hours to cross the border to Italy.

¹⁶ According to de Certeau, the tactic takes advantages of “opportunities and operates in isolated actions, blow in blow.” As a consequence, it can never keep what it wins (de Certeau, 1984: 37).

¹⁷ A series of short glances that replace a prolonged look or a “gaze” is characteristic for the scopic or visual regime that is molded and supported by the urban situation (see P. Falk in C. Campbell, 1997: 176). However, shopping sites support a specific scopic regime that is characteristic for the shopping experience. Since the goods on display in the shops do not see you and do not return the look, there is no need for a civil indifference and serial reciprocity. A visual regime of shopping that is characteristic for shopping malls or shopping streets allows prolonged looks: gazing, watching and staring at objects-goods, advertising images or urban spectacles.

¹⁸ Our informants, who could be classified as middle class, made a point of stressing that they never engaged in the smuggling of goods for later resale.